

1/28/23

Honorable Representative Lori Houghton,

I am writing to you as I have learned that the Counseling Compact issue will be discussed next Tuesday. I would like to offer a specific situation related to this.

I have a private practice with offices in Montpelier and Tunbridge. I am a Clinical Social Worker, and Veteran, with over 40 years of practice to include 24 years of working with the VA Medical system,

A third of my clients are Veterans, some of which I see through the VA Community Care Program which was put in place by legislation submitted by our own Senator Bernie Sanders along with the late Senator John McCain (Originally called the Veterans Choice Program).

When Veterans I have been working with move to another state, I cannot continue to see them by way of Telehealth as the laws are currently structured. Thus, they must travel to Vermont to see me, sometimes for hours before getting here.

Let's consider what makes that concerning. A Vermont Veteran who deployed into Combat, was exposed to significant hostile fire, lost close friends, and traveled on dangerous, bomb infested roads must travel for hours to see a counselor for trauma therapy. It took that Veteran years before he or she could begin to talk to someone and form a safe treatment relationship. Our laws however are requiring them to endure more stress in order to get help. Add to this the fact that Vermont has a much higher suicide rate per capita amongst its Veteran population than other states.

In this specific situation I have presented it becomes clear how supporting the Counseling Compact would mean supporting those who have put their lives at extreme risk to keep us safe.

Thank you for what you do to support Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Daniel G Guertin, LICSW